

Masonic Building & Court House
Uxbridge, Massachusetts

Worcester

HABS No. MASS-411

HABS
MASS.

14 - UXBRI

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Massachusetts

Historic American Buildings Survey
Frank Chouteau Brown, District Officer
76 Chestnut Street, Boston, Mass.

ADDENDUM TO
MASONIC BUILDING & COURTHOUSE
Uxbridge
Worcester County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-411

HABS
MASS
14-UXBRI,
1-

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington D.C. 20013-7127

HAB5
MASS
14-UXBR1,
1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
ADDENDUM 70:
MASONIC BUILDING AND COURTHOUSE

HABS No. MA-411

Location: Uxbridge, Worcester County, Massachusetts.

Significance: An early example of public-private partnership, the citizens of Uxbridge and the Solomon's Temple of the Freemasons joined forces to build a two story brick edifice on the north end of the town common.

Description: In contrast to the wood-frame, one story schoolhouses in school districts around Uxbridge, the "Masonic Building and Courthouse" stands two stories tall. It is brick on top of a cut stone block foundation and is capped by a pitched roof. A cupola graced its rooftop. All of the door and window openings are framed by splayed lintels and wood sills. The lintels are made from hammered granite. The south facade, made of brick laid in Flemish bond, has asymmetrical fenestration. The second story has five windows, below are three doors and two windows. Two entries are at the ends, and the third is just west of center. A 1839 woodcut shows only one entrance, in the center, in keeping with the regular sequence of wall openings in the other facades. The east wall, also constructed in Flemish bond, has two windows in each story and one in the gable end. The gable end window is a blind, arched indentation framed by fluted columns, that appear to support the arch. Inside, masonic symbols painted in yellow and gold herald the structure's use as a masonic meeting hall. Regular fenestration appears on the north wall; five windows hover over those in the first story. To the west, the second story wall openings, twelve-over-twelve sash, are topped by a small light offset in the gable. Below, one window and a one story addition disrupt the facade at ground level. The bricks in the north and west walls are laid in common bond.

The building's sash and doors were changed ca. 1880-1900; its steps and terrace altered in the mid-twentieth century; and the one story brick addition on the west side added in ca. 1900-30. The cupola is missing.

History: Built in 1819, the Masonic Building and Courthouse represents the institutional development of Uxbridge. The structure exemplifies the federal period's (1776-1830) wedding of schoolhouse and masonic hall functions, an arrangement made necessary by the lack of town supported schools. Today, it is part of the Uxbridge Common District, along the main route between Worcester and Providence. This area served the town's residential and civic needs during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In 1819, the town of Uxbridge voted to build a schoolhouse on the town common, according to specified dimensions. The citizens of Uxbridge paid by subscription for half of the building and the Freemason's Lodge paid the difference. The "Uxbridge Academy" opened in Fall 1820, by a Harvard graduate, Abiel Jaques. The high school occupied the first floor; the masons used the second floor as their meeting house. In 1832, the "Uxbridge Academy" became a female academy for select young ladies. By 1855 the town grew large enough for the state to mandate a town-supported high school. The town high school used the facility until 1867. At that time the district court moved into the lower floor. The court stayed on the premises until the mid-twentieth century. The Solomon's Temple of the Freemasons continue to use the second floor for Lodge meetings.

MASONIC BUILDING AND COURTHOUSE
HABS No. MA-411
(page 2)

Sources: Fitch, Virginia, "National Register Nomination Form: Town of Uxbridge," National Register for Historic Places, National Park Service, 1983.

Historic Buildings of Massachusetts. edited by John C. Poppeliers. Scribner Historic Building Series. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976. Photographic catalogue of historic buildings, built primarily during the colonial and federal periods.

Inventory Form, Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1981 (part of Uxbridge Common District).